

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 STATE 092067
ORIGIN PM-05

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TO AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 092067

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, SW, FR, IN, PK

SUBJECT:GELB-ROBINSON MEETING ON AIRCRAFT SALES TO INDIA

1. PM DIRECTOR GELB AND DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR EUR GOODBY MET AT 11:00 A.M. FRIDAY, MARCH 31 WITH BRITISH MINISTER JOHN ROBINSON AND BRITISH EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY ANTHONY REEVE TO DISCUSS POSSIBLE SALE OF DPSA TO INDIA.
2. GELB BEGAN BY STATING THAT HE HAD BEEN REQUIRED BY SECRETARY VANCE TO CARRY ON THE DISCUSSIONS THAT WE HAD HELD PREVIOUSLY WITH THE BRITISH UNDERSECRETARY FOR EAST ASIA, DONALD MURRAY. GELB STATED THAT WE CONTINUE TO HOLD TO THE POINTS WE MADE TO MURRY IN DECEMBER MEANING THAT SUCH A SALE WITH CO-PRODUCTION WOULD INTRODUCE A NEW MILITARY CAPABILITY INTO THE SOUTH ASIAN REGION. PAKISTAN OF COURSE WANTED TO BUY THE A-7 FROM THE U.S. AND WE TURNED IT DOWN
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FOR THIS REASON. ALSO THIS DENIAL WAS THE COST OF U.S.- PAKISTANI RELATIONS AS WELL AS A LOSS OF A POTENTIAL 7 HUNDRED MILLION DOLLAR SALE TO VOUGHT AIRCRAFT. THE TURN-DOWN MEANT A CLOSING OF VOUGHT'S PRODUCTION LINE. WE BELIEVE THEN AND WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE THAT THE ACQUISITION OF SUCH AN AIRCRAFT BY EITHER INDIA OR PAKISTAN WOULD ADD SUBSTANTIAL OFFENSIVE CAPABILITY. IF INDIA ACQUIRED SUCH AN

AIRCRAFT, PAKISTAN WILL FEEL COMPELLED TO SEEK A SIMILAR AIRCRAFT. OUR JUSTIFICATION TO THE PAKISTANIS IN DENYING THE A-7 WAS THAT INDIA DID NOT HAVE SUCH AN AIRCRAFT. IF INDIA BUYS A DPSA, PAKISTAN WILL RETURN TO US FOR THE A-7. ADDITIONALLY, THIS PURCHASE MAY ENCOURAGE PAKISTAN TO SEEK A NUCLEAR CAPABILITY.

3. GELB CONTINUED THAT THE SECRETARY HAD ASKED HIM TO STRESS OUR RECOGNITION OF THE DESIRABILITY OF STRONG INDIAN TIES TO THE WEST AND A LESSENING OF ITS DEPENDENTS ON THE SOVIET UNION FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT, BUT WE WOULD LIKE TO SEE WESTERN SUPPORT FOR MULTILATERAL ARMS RESTRAINT. THE SECRETARY LIKED FOREIGN MINISTER OWEN'S SPEECH OF MARCH 1ST ON RESTRAINT. THE USG WANTED TO EXERCISE RESTRAINT IN A REALISTICALLY WAY THAT MEETS ALL OF THE ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL CONCERNS AS WELL AS ARMS TRANSFER CONCERNS. SUCH A SALE WOULD DEFEAT THE PURPOSE OF OUR POLICY TO DAMPEN REGIONAL ARMS SPIRAL AND COULD CREATE PRESSURE TO RE-OPEN THE A-7 DECISION AND IT WOULD WADE THE SUSPICION OF THOSE WHO OPPOSE OUR POLICY ARGUING THAT EUROPEAN SUPPLIERS WILL CONTINUE TO FEEL GAPS.

4. GELB STATED THAT THE URGENCY OF THIS PROBLEM RESTS IN PART ON THE FACT THAT A INDIAN DECISION MAY BE IMMINENT. HE THEN ASKED MORETON THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:
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A) IF THE DECISION WERE THAT ON THE JAGUAR HOW SOON WOULD THIS AIRCRAFT ENTER INDIAN INVENTORY?

B) WHAT DO YOU SEE AS A REALISTIC ESTIMATE OF THE TIMING?

C) WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE PRODUCTION AND HOW DOES IT ADD TO INDIAN CAPABILITY?

GELB MENTIONED THAT IN DECEMBER THE BRITISH HAD EXPECTED A DECISION AT ANY MOMENT BUT WE HAVE INDICATIONS THAT THE INDIANS HAVE NOT YET MADE A FINAL DECISION ON WHETHER TO ACQUIRE A DPSA.

5. GELB STATED THAT FRANKLY WE NOW HAD AN ADDITIONAL SPECIAL PROBLEM BECAUSE THE SWEDISH VIGGEN WAS UNDER CONSIDERATION. THIS AIRCRAFT HAS A U.S. ENGINE MEANING U.S. APPROVAL IS REQUIRED FOR ITS SALE. UNDER US LAW WE CANNOT GIVE PERMISSION IF WE ARE NOT PREPARED TO MAKE THE SALE OURSELVES. SWEDEN REGARDS THE SALE AS VITAL TO ITS AIR INDUSTRY AND ARGUES THAT IF WE DO NOT ALLOW THEM TO COMPLETE THE INDIAN PURCHASE, WE WILL BE PLACING THEM AT

AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE AGAINST THE BRITISH AND FRENCH.

6. IN VIEW OF THESE FACTORS, GELB SAID WE WISHED FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE BENEFITS AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE JAGUAR SALE AND EXPLORE VARIATIONS THAT WOULD MINIMIZE THE POTENTIAL OF A NEW ARMS RACE. SPEAKING PERSONALLY, GELB ADDED, HE REALIZED THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NEW PURCHASES AND LEGITIMATE MODERNIZATION. PERHAPS THERE WAS A WAY TO DISSIPATE ADVERSE REACTION. AS POSSIBILITIES, HE MENTIONED WORKING OUT INDIAN ASSURANCES TO PAKISTAN ON THE ROLE AND BASING OF THE AIRCRAFT AND EXPANDING OUR MULTILATERAL DISCUSSIONS TO INCLUDE THE SOVIETS.

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7. ROBINSON RESPONDED THAT HE SAW ONLY THREE NEW ELEMENTS ONLY SINCE WE HAD DISCUSSED THIS IN DECEMBER.

-- THE SECRETARY HAD ASKED GELB TO SEE THEM AND EXPRESS HIS CONCERN.

-- THAT PAKISTAN WOULD TAKE NEW AND DIFFERENT ATTITUDE ON NUCLEAR POTENTIAL IN VIEW OF THE SALE.

-- THE SWEDISH CLAIM THAT THE SALE WAS VITAL TO THEIR AIR INDUSTRY, AND THEREFORE THEIR ROLE IN WESTERN EUROPEAN DEFENSE.

TO THESE POINTS THE BRITISH REPLIED THAT THEY WOULD TAKE THE SECRETARY'S PERSONAL INTEREST INTO ACCOUNT BUT THAT THEY BELIEVED THAT THE DETERMINING FACTOR IN PAKISTAN'S DECISION ON NUCLEAR MATTERS IS THE INDIAN NUCLEAR CAPABILITY. FURTHER IT WAS THEIR VIEW THAT THE SWEDISH ISSUE COULD BE PUT TO ONE SIDE SINCE THE REAL CONTEST WAS BETWEEN THE JAGUAR AND MIRAGE FOR THE SALE AND SWEDEN DID NOT HAVE A PRAYER.

8. ROBINSON ALSO POINTED OUT THAT BRITAIN HAD A POLITICAL COMMITMENT TO INDIA FOR THIS SALE DATING FROM AUGUST 1975 AND A REFUSAL TO SELL AT THIS TIME WOULD CAUSE SERIOUS BILATERAL PROBLEMS. BRITAIN DID NOT BELIEVE A JAGUAR SALE WOULD CHANGE THE MILITARY SITUATION IN SOUTH ASIA SINCE INDIA IS AND WOULD REMAIN SUPERIOR. IN ANY CASE INDIA WAS DETERMINED TO BUY A DPSA FROM THE WEST OR THE SOVIETS; MULTILATERAL TALKS WOULD NOT BE EFFECTIVE BECAUSE INDIA WILL DECIDE SHORTLY.

9. ROBINSON THEN SAID HE DID NOT HAVE AT HAND THE SPECIFIC
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INFORMATION TO ANSWER GELB'S QUESTIONS, BUT HE BELIEVED

THAT THEY TOLD US IN DECEMBER THAT DELIVERIES WOULD BEGIN THREE YEARS AFTER A CONTRACT WAS SIGNED AND THE DEAL WOULD BE ANNOUNCED IN A WAY THAT WOULD NOT CAUSE UNDUE CONCERN.

10. GELB THEN SAID THAT HE BELIEVED THAT THERE WERE OTHER NEW ELEMENTS IN HIS PRESENTATION. ONE WAS THE OWENS SPEECH OF MARCH 1 ON CURRENT TRENDS IN ARMS SALES; THE SECOND WAS THE SUGGESTION OF FURTHER CONVERSATIONS ON THE MODALITIES OF A DPSA SALE; AND THIRDLY, WE WERE GIVING THOUGHT TO RAISING THE ISSUE IN OUR TALKS WITH THE SOVIETS ON MAY 4 BECAUSE ANY POSSIBILITY OF LIMITING OTHER SOVIET WEAPONS SALES TO INDIA MIGHT BE UNDERMINED BY A WESTERN AIRCRAFT SALE.

11. ROBINSON REPLIED THAT HE QUESTIONED THE LAST POINT AND THOUGHT IT DRAMATIC TO SAY THAT ONE SALE WILL AFFECT SOVIET POLICY. HE ALSO SAID THAT THE FOREIGN SECRETARY'S SPEECH DOES NOT QUALIFY OR CANCEL A COMMITMENT TO INDIA, AND FIRMLY STRESSED THAT THEY COULD NOT GO BACK ON THE OFFER WITHOUT THE WORST CONSEQUENCES FOR UK-INDIAN RELATIONS.

12. GELB REPLIED THAT WE HAD HEARD THE BRITISH IN DECEMBER ON THIS ISSUE, BUT SECRETARY VANCE ASKED HIM TO CONVEY THESE MESSAGES AND HE HOPED THE BRITISH WOULD GIVE CONSIDERATION TO OUR POINTS. GELB THEN RETURNED TO THE SWEDISH CONCERNS SAYING THAT WE DID NOT WISH TO TAKE THE HEAT FOR A DENIAL OF THE VIGGEN, IF IT INDEED HAD NO CHANCE TO WIN THE COMPETITION; BUT WE DID NOT WANT THE SWEDES TO FEEL THAT THEY HAD LOST THE SALE BECAUSE THE USG WOULD NOT GIVE THEM A FIRM ANSWER ON THEIR REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO SELL.

13. ROBINSON CONCLUDED HIS REMARKS BY SAYING THAT THEY

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 092067

FOLLOWING REPEAT STATE 092067 SENT ACTION STOCKHOLM PARIS
NEW DELHI ISLAMABAD APR 11.
QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 092067

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Message Attributes

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TAGS: MASS, SW, FR, IN, PK
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